

Testimony in favor of HB 6187 An Act Concerning the Protection of Animals That Are the Subject of Criminal Court Proceedings and SB 1128 An Act Prohibiting the Use of Accelerated Rehabilitation in the Case of Animal Abuse

I am a resident of Guilford and a volunteer for Connecticut Votes for Animals.

The problem: A survey in Massachusetts found there to be 2.2 complaints of animal mistreatment per 1000 households per year. This number is almost certainly an underestimate. A violation of the law was observed by the investigating officer in 37.5 percent of cases. About 6.5 percent of cases involved some intentional act by a human, such as assault and abandonment. Studies have shown an association between cruelty to animals and a variety of other anti-social behaviors, including violence to humans.

Personal experience: For many years I was a volunteer for Golden Retriever rescue in northern California, a program that matches Golden Retrievers in need of homes with potential adopters. Included in our work was rescuing dogs from abusive situations. One dog had been shot in the head and left for dead by the side of a highway. Several dogs had been routinely beaten with objects such as boards with exposed nails. Others were routinely kicked. One was given water and food, but was never, ever let out of a filthy shed. Another was being starved. Many had serious medical conditions.

Existing Connecticut Law: Despite cases of horrific cruelty, Connecticut law states that a person committing any act of animal cruelty shall be fined not more than \$1000 or imprisoned not more than one year or both. In other words, the perpetrators may be given at most only a slight slap in the wrist. Furthermore, because even acts of extreme cruelty may not be considered serious, perpetrators may merely have to undergo Accelerated Rehabilitation.

HB 6187, An Act Concerning the Protection of Animals That Are the Subject of Criminal Court

Proceedings: Animals cannot speak for themselves. HB 6187 is a commonsense solution to this problem by establishing a system to provide an abused animal with a designated individual (on a voluntary basis) to undertake an independent investigation of the cruelty case and of the needs of the animal. The individual would then make recommendations to the court.

SB 1128, An Act Prohibiting the Use of Accelerated Rehabilitation in the Cases of Animal Abuse:

Accelerated rehabilitation is meant for non-serious crimes. Animal abuse is a serious crime, and is correlated with abusive behavior to humans as well. Accelerated rehabilitation should not be an option for those who commit serious crimes.

Passage of these bills should give abused animals more of a fair shake and reduce the frequency of animal and human abuse.

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